

COLOMBIAN HEALTH TOURISM



Colombian health tourism is bringing more and more visitors to the country. Antonio Crespo, head of the Colombia Tours Solutions travel agency claims that "Of all those people coming to Colombia, at least 3 percent come to get medical treatment". He also said that in 2004 there were some 21,000 people coming for surgery and in 2005, it was about 30,000 people."

The city of Cartagena can be taken as an example. This is the capital of the Bolívar Department and a large seaport on the northern coast of Colombia. Nowadays it is known for its flourishing medical tourism. The city is said to be safe. There are world class hotels, restaurants, shopping, the beaches, islands, nightlife, casinos, as well as bargain prices. A big attraction for tourists is the history of the city and its association with the famous pirate Francis Drake. Travelers can use Rafael Núñez International Airport to come here.

The main draw for medical tourists is price, since costs are much lower here than in the U.S. or in western European countries. Most Cartagena doctors, nurses and technicians receive their training from Cartagena's medical and dental universities. The City also attracts many of Colombia's best doctors. Many doctors complete their postgraduate studies in the U.S., Canada or European universities. Cartagena's hospitals are supplied with the newest drugs and medical equipment. The high quality of services provided is, in a way, a result of cooperation between hospitals and local universities. Many doctors and dentists speak English, and communication should not be a problem.

Various agencies arrange medical treatments for tourists in Colombia. These professionals offer bi-lingual services, such as: meeting a visitor at the airport, hotel/restaurant reservations, handling all transportation needs, and of course guided tours for shopping and sightseeing.

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